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THE EXPERIMENT THAT DID NOT FAIL: IMAGE AND REALITY IN THE ISRAELI KIBBUTZ

The kibbutzim of Israel show the world that communal living can be successful, and many observers have asked the questions: Can this success be repeated elsewhere? What are its lessons for other societies? In sociology, the validity and importance of comparative study and the intrinsic interest of the kibbutz way of life cannot be denied. This article questions the use of the kibbutz movement as a social scientific laboratory, arguing that commentators risk disguising the particular problems the movement has faced, the strategies it has employed to overcome them, and the role it has played in the development of Israeli society. The interaction between the movement and the wider society has had far-reaching consequences for both the kibbutzim and Israel, and these must be clearly understood before possibly rash conclusions are drawn. Comparative studies of kibbutzim, like all comparative studies, must be open to serious question unless the broader context of Yishuv and Israeli society is taken into consideration.

The discussion opens with a review of some of the literature that treats the kibbutz as a laboratory. A historical overview shows the inextricable relationship between the kibbutz movement and all spheres of Israeli society—economic, political, ideological, military, and defensive. I will discuss some examples of how the kibbutz–environment interaction can be shown to have had specific, demonstrable effects. The first example is the effect on national planning, which indicates some of the ways the kibbutz movement has influenced Israeli society in general. The other three examples are more specific, relating to features of the kibbutz of the mid-1970s, when I carried out anthropological fieldwork. They show the results on the kibbutzim themselves of the interactive kibbutz–environment relationship. These are particularly clear in the kibbutz economies and penetrate, I will suggest, most areas of kibbutz life. In conclusion, I will argue that the lessons of the kibbutz as a comparative case are indeed important, but that they are not direct.

THE EXPERIMENT

Martin Buber's (1949) well-known phrase extolling the kibbutz as an "experiment that did not fail," a successful commune, and a model for communalists

everywhere was echoed by many of his contemporaries (Infield, 1946; Landshut, 1944). He wrote during the heyday of the kibbutz movement: a greater proportion of the Jewish population in Palestine/Israel (Shur, 1972) were involved with the movement than ever before, or ever since—some from the highest political and military levels in the foundation of the new state (Arian, 1968)—and the economy was entering a boom period (Kanovsky, 1966). Since then, many outsiders have looked to the kibbutz as a model for cooperativism (Geertz, 1964). Benn (1964) recommended the kibbutz as an example of the successful practice of socialism for the Third World; Rodinson (1973, p. 83) admits, if grudgingly, that kibbutzim are “perhaps the most advanced example ever seen of the virtues that can be developed by a communitarian life style inspired by humanist ideology.”

Kanovsky (1966) describes the very practical interest in the kibbutz shown by Burma, Ghana, and West African Francophone countries, whose officials investigated it as a potential means of cooperativization at home. Veysey (1978) notes the inspirational role of the kibbutz in 20th-century communal experimentation in the United States. Bergmann (1980, p. 228) notes that collectives in Japan and Italy have “taken the kibbutz as an example,” and argues that real socialism is to be found in the kibbutz, in contrast to the so-called socialist states.

In sociology, the kibbutz is used for various ends. Frank (1968) evaluates the kibbutz for its applicability in the process of development in African countries, concluding that in most cases it is inappropriate because of the degree of ideological commitment involved. Barkin and Bennett's (1972, p. 457) lengthy and detailed comparison between the Hutterite colony and the kibbutz is used to suggest “a frame of reference for the analysis of the efforts of these communal societies to balance internal and external forces.” Van den Berghe and Peter (1988, p. 524) compare kibbutzim and Hutterite colonies as well, arguing that, although there are many differences between them, both have succeeded because they “pragmatically modified their ideology to accommodate an irrepressible individualism and familism,” thus uncovering the secret of communalistic success. Abrams and McCulloch (1976, p. 209), despite arguing that the kibbutz experience is of only “indirect relevance,” repeatedly refer to internal characteristics of kibbutzim to illuminate features of British communes. Aziz (1978) uses the kibbutz as a key comparative case in his assessment of the lessons offered by Chinese communes.

The kibbutz has also been used as a testing ground for a number of sociological theories, such as questioning the universality of the family (Spiro, 1954) and examining the universality of gender roles (Tiger and Shepher, 1975). The kibbutz is also said to offer lessons for other societies in solving various social problems. Wershow (1973), for example, suggests that the lack of formal retirement in the kibbutz means that aged people do not suffer the alienation and isolation they do in Western industrial society when identity-giving work is taken away. Macarov (1975) argues that motivation to work in the kibbutz derives from commitment rather than high wages and suggests that this principle could be applied elsewhere to raise productivity. Leviatan (1978) concludes that rotation of managerial office in kibbutzim is more efficient than long-term occupancy because it keeps people alert, creative, and involved in their work.

Leviatan (1984) offers a systematic treatment of what he sees as the potential of the kibbutz for cross-cultural research, listing topics whose investigation in the kibbutz will help further sociological theory and solve social problems in other industrial societies. The theoretical topics are role theory, the sociology of work, the sociology of aging, demography, achievement motivation, social interactionism, and systems theory. The substantive topics are gender roles, the effects of nonretirement on old people, longitudinal studies, collection of accurate data on individuals, holistic studies, informal social control, and "intervention-oriented research" involving experiments. For Leviatan, the kibbutz is apparently a laboratory for the social researcher in which almost any topic can be investigated under reasonably controlled conditions. Although, at the end of his discussion, he outlines some potential difficulties in using the kibbutz in this way, he believes they can be overcome: aspects of kibbutz life can be treated as independent of kibbutz organization as a whole; the small size of kibbutzim need not bar comparison with wide-scale social structure; and the Israeli component of kibbutz culture can be controlled for by including a sample of non-kibbutznik Israelis in any research study.

Certainly, not all the sociologists mentioned here would agree with Leviatan's suggestions; in particular, Abrams and McCulloch (1976) and Barkin and Bennett (1972) offer a number of provisos, especially concerning the relationship between the kibbutz and the wider society. Nevertheless, it is clear that there is a strong tendency in several areas of sociological investigation towards viewing the kibbutz as a laboratory, as Leviatan has outlined.

The kibbutz movement's own ideological structure helps explain why it has been inspirational for communards and sociologists alike, why both groups have sought in the movement the solutions to different problems. Van Teeffelen (1977; cf. Rosenfeld, 1958) suggests that research in the kibbutz contains an ideological trap: kibbutzim present themselves as successful social experiments, and demand commitment to a socialist ideology from their members; a researcher on a kibbutz is forced by the very intensity of interaction there, by the vigorous scrutiny of the people s/he researches, into identifying with the kibbutz as a community. Two particular aspects of this are important: first, the researcher finds great difficulty, van Teeffelen (1977) suggests, in showing negative aspects of kibbutz life. The profuse apologies Evens (1975, 1980) makes for his analysis of a dispute confirm this suggestion. Second, there is a tendency to focus on the kibbutz as a self-determined, dynamic community that carries on its own way of life independently of, and sometimes in opposition to, Israeli life, customs, and social structure. I have fallen into this trap myself, particularly in my thesis (Bowes, 1977), though I have recently attempted an escape by reworking some earlier material (Bowes 1978, 1986).

It is also important to note the kibbutz movement's own involvement in social research: a kibbutz member told me in 1976 that "sociologists are the new ideologists of the kibbutz movement," referring to the great amount of material being produced by research institutes attached to the federations of kibbutzim at that time. The topics chosen for investigation and the kinds of solutions offered to minor difficulties reflected the concerns of powerful individuals within the kibbutz movement. My informant suggested that the researchers themselves were

part of this power structure, and that just as the kibbutz movement itself aimed to influence the wider society towards socialism, the movement-based research offered the kibbutz as a generally positive example of socialism in practice. While we may not want to adopt this view wholesale, we have to recognize a tendency for movement-based research to continue a commitment to kibbutz ideology and make the kibbutz an example to the outside world. It is a mark of one of the successes of the kibbutz movement that outside commentators repeatedly use it for inspiration, comparison, or lessons, often without fully questioning the validity of their enterprises.

KIBBUTZ AND YISHUV: FOUNDATIONS OF INTERACTION

Modern Zionist migration to Palestine began in the 1880s, and after some early, short-lived experiments at communal living, Degania, the first kibbutz, was founded in 1910. Settlers who became involved in attempts at communal living were young, in their late teens and early twenties, and mostly male (Maimon, 1962). All were Zionists, some were socialists and many had been involved in Jewish scout groups in Europe (Spiro, 1970). However, despite a clear conviction that they must go to Palestine and participate in the Jewish settlement of the Homeland, and despite an inclination towards socialism, they actually had very little idea of what Palestine was like or how they were going to live when they arrived (Viteles, 1967).

The organization of Degania, and the other early kibbutzim that followed it, evolved through a series of responses to practical and ideological difficulties. As problems arose, they were endlessly discussed (Amitai, 1966; Baratz, 1954), and the types of solutions reached, while generally socialist and generally Zionist, could not have been predicted in detail. The rather diffuse socialism and Zionism and ad hoc approach to problem solving are explained by the absence of a clearly defined and articulated plan for living. Ben-David (1964, p. 47) refers to "an almost pure process of trial and error," which was to remain the hallmark of the kibbutz movement until 1948.

The early years of the movement's development show the settlers responding to circumstances as they met them, without clearly defined practical plans or established principles. Inevitably, they were to be influenced by developments elsewhere in the Yishuv. As time went on, they began to respond in ways advantageous to themselves and to influence the course of Zionism and, in the end, the nature of the Israeli state.

During the British Mandate (1919–1948), the kibbutz movement became part of the Zionist establishment in Palestine. In numbers, kibbutzim grew more rapidly than any other type of Jewish settlement, although they continued to represent a small percentage of the total Jewish population (Ben-David, 1964). They acquired great ideological and political importance, became the strongest sector of the rural economy, and developed a critical role in defending Jewish settlement.

As kibbutz settlement continued, there was ideological and organizational consolidation that included the development of formal links between the settlers

in Palestine and the youth movements in Europe to prepare new settlers practically and ideologically for the process of settlement. This development was reinforced by the crystallization of a more explicit set of moral postulates (Spiro, 1970), which included an analysis of the position of the Jews in Europe. The latter was formulated by Ber Borochov (1948), who emphasized the lack of a European Jewish proletarian base, argued for a separate Jewish socialist revolution in Palestine, and stressed the importance of manual work and the dignity of labor that had first been articulated by A. D. Gordon, one of the pioneers of Degania. For the settlers in Palestine, learning manual labor was the first step in the Jewish revolution and the renaissance of the Jews as a nation founded on socialism. They were not founding a kibbutz as an end in itself, but even at this early period looked outwards, aiming to influence all Jewish settlement in Palestine (Near, 1986). The kibbutz federations founded in the late 1920s facilitated communication between settlements in Palestine, and between the settlers and the world-wide Zionist movement.

The developing ideological and organizational strength of the kibbutz movement during the Mandate was not simply a result of its inherent qualities. The kibbutzim were as dependent on the Jewish National Fund (for access to land), the Zionist movement as a whole (for manpower), the Mandate authorities (both for land and as a target for resistance) as they were on their own resources (mainly manpower and ideas). But the kibbutz movement could respond to circumstances as they occurred in ways that would be advantageous to its own development. These responses proved increasingly beneficial to the Zionist endeavor and increasingly antipathetic to the Mandate government and the Arab nationalists—which were both less and less inclined to support Zionism, as the former began to lose control of Palestine, and the latter began to press their own claims to the country.

With worsening relations between Jews, Arabs, and Mandate authorities, the movement was able to enhance its position in the Yishuv by defensive operations. Since a commune was more easily mobilized for defense than a cooperative (moshav) with its family farms (Kanovsky, 1966), the settlement authorities saw kibbutz settlement as more appropriate for areas thought to be hostile to settlers. Kibbutzim also developed their own method for placing prefabricated settlements—the tower and stockade (*choma vemigdal*)—overnight in hostile regions. In the last years of the Mandate, the kibbutzim provided important bases and sources of recruitment for the Jewish underground, particularly the Palmach and the Haganah (Drabkin, 1962). Kibbutz defensive abilities were further proven in the War of Independence, when many communities successfully held out against the advancing Arab armies (e.g., Kibbutz Yad Mordechai; Larkin, 1971).

Ideological and organizational consolidation and military success rested on a strong economic base, probably the key feature in the overall success of the kibbutzim. Early settlements were predominantly agricultural: the return to the soil was to be the agent for the rebirth of the Jewish people. Pioneering Zionism, the dominant ideology of the period, placed great value on rural settlement (Cohen, 1970), which helped maintain kibbutz ascendancy. Agriculture was generally viewed as progressive. In the kibbutzim, great stress was laid on

mechanization and intensification of production and on the diversification of the economy (Cohen, 1966). Kibbutz agriculture advanced rapidly in the late Mandate period and quickly became the most efficient organization in the country (Cohen, 1966, p. 8). Kibbutzim chose the crops that were best suited to the communal social organization they were evolving and that would enable them to raise their standards of living quickly. They could develop to suit themselves, virtually without competition, thereby laying firm foundations for their success after 1948.

The Zionist authorities looked on kibbutz agriculture with favor in the 1930s and 1940s: as a form of settlement, the kibbutz had several particular attractions. First, setting up a kibbutz required less capital investment than setting up a moshav (Kanovsky, 1966). Second, since less and less land was available for Jewish settlement and the J.N.F. (and the Zionist movement generally) wanted to be sure that the land would be successfully farmed, the kibbutzim with their progressive agricultural orientations and their trained work force were particularly attractive. Such practical considerations helped reinforce the dominance of pioneering Zionism, which matched the developing kibbutz-movement ideology.

THE KIBBUTZ MOVEMENT AND THE STATE OF ISRAEL

With the foundation of the state of Israel in 1948, the situation changed radically for the kibbutzim. Sources of recruitment dried up virtually overnight; the kibbutzim became isolated from new immigrants; a new state bureaucracy took over from the old Zionist establishment and the Mandate; the military situation altered completely; and there were far reaching political and economic changes. Despite all this, however, the kibbutzim became part of the state establishment by consolidating and building on their position in the Yishuv.

European Jewry, including the youth movements which were the main recruiting ground of the kibbutzim, had been decimated during the Second World War, and the early years of the state saw a massive influx of immigrants from North Africa and Arabia (Eisenstadt, 1967). From the point of view of the kibbutz movement, these people were quite unsuitable recruits, lacking socialist ideas, modern Zionist commitments, and aspirations for rural life and proletarian rebirth. Those immigrants who were allocated to rural settlements by the settlement authorities were placed instead in moshavim (Baldwin, 1972, gives a full discussion). Some kibbutzim participated indirectly in the process of immigrant settlement by employing these new moshavniks until they were ready to start farming their moshav plots (Shatil, 1966), although other kibbutzim refused on principle to take on any hired labor, even to assist new immigrants (Kanovsky, 1966). Another means of involvement lay in participation in the new state administration: between 1948 and 1953, one-eighth of the veteran members left the kibbutzim to take up government jobs, thus becoming immediately involved in the processes of immigrant settlement and absorption (Kanovsky, 1966). So even though the kibbutzim lost members in this period, kibbutzniks were participating at the highest level in directing the new state and were to exercise considerable influence.

In defense, the role of the kibbutz underwent considerable change. After 1948, the army was run by the state, and underground military activity based in kibbutzim was no longer necessary. At the same time, the government realized that the kibbutzim retained their defensive abilities and that the ideological commitment of kibbutz members could be used to its advantage. In consequence, many post-1948 kibbutzim were founded on the borders and in other sensitive areas, where they could provide a firm military presence (Garber and Cohen, 1964). In the mid-1950s, the army established Nahal (Shokeid, 1971), a unit in which recruits spent part of their army service working in kibbutzim. Nahal was strongly supported by the kibbutz movement; it was seen as helping to prevent army service from directing potential kibbutz recruits away from kibbutz settlement (Garber and Cohen, 1964). Enthusiasm for Nahal was one consequence of the shortage of recruits that developed in the kibbutzim in the 1950s.

With the increasing involvement of kibbutz members and former kibbutz members in national politics and administration, the kibbutz federations became more and more tied to their political party affiliations (Ben-David, 1964). This trend intensified developments in the Mandate and precipitated a crisis within the kibbutzim. At the time, the Israeli political left was in turmoil over anti-Jewish policies in the USSR. Mapai condemned the Russian actions, and Mapam continued to support the Soviet Union as a socialist state. At the kibbutz level, this debate led to much argument and bitterness, and many kibbutzim split in two (Stern, 1965; Viteles, 1967). As they did so, they became more firmly allied to the political parties of their members' choice, allowing the parties to be more confident in relying on those that were considered their kibbutzim for political support (Arian, 1968). Views differ on the precise nature of the relationships forged at this time; Stern (1965) argues that the kibbutzim were dominated by the political parties and Kanovsky (1966) that the kibbutzim dominated them. Certainly, close and persistent ties were established in the early 1950s; this resulted in, among other things, the kibbutz federations levying a manpower tax and taking 6 percent of kibbutz members to work in the federation (Kanovsky, 1966). Federation workers were effectively full-time party workers: a steady, committed, and reliable source of political manpower (Arian, 1968). Furthermore, Davis (Blatt et al., 1975) estimates that the kibbutz movement supplied 20 percent of holders of high political office in Israel between 1948 and 1967. And in the 1974–1977 Labor government, 4 of 18 cabinet members were also kibbutz members (Weingrod and Gurevitch, 1977). Near (1986, p. 203) describes them as a “serving elite,” perhaps underplaying their power—as did the kibbutz movement itself, preferring to be seen as a workers' movement, not a governing elite.

In his study of Israeli political behavior, Arian (1968) demonstrated that pioneering Zionism was the predominant ideology of successive Labor governments until the 1970s. Undoubtedly, many Labor policies expressed kibbutz ideals and benefited the kibbutzim particularly. The kibbutz movement's position in the elite, here expressed in the implementation of movement ideology, was clearly evident. The Likud bloc's 1977 election victory was described by many Israeli newspapers as an “earthquake” (Peretz, 1977). It was a victory for an ideology that was entirely opposed to the kibbutz movement. Herut, Begin's own

party and the dominant force in the group, represented "revisionist Zionism" (Sherman, 1982), the old antisocialist faction from the Yishuv whose ideas and methods had seemed discredited. Likud's policies in government attacked the kibbutz movement by, for example, shifting the focus of new settlement to the West Bank, in pursuit of Greater Israel, a concept opposed by the kibbutz movement. Economic strictures, such as cuts in subsidies, were also applied to kibbutzim, reversing previous practice. And Likud's subsequent election campaigns attempted to capitalize on some working-class town dwellers' idea of kibbutz politicians as "privileged, patronizing representatives of the European-origin establishment" (Sherman, 1982, p. 57).

Peretz (1977) attributes Likud's first victory, and Aronson and Yanai (1984) its second in 1981, to a decline in the Israeli left-wing parties, associated with a decline in their affiliated institutions, including the kibbutzim. They refer in particular to the leadership: aging, retiring, representatives of a bygone era (Peretz, 1977), who were preoccupied with internal squabbles (Aronson and Yanai, 1984). For them, apparently, 1977 might prove a turning point for Israeli national ideology and consequently a turning point for the kibbutz movement, which would be driven willy-nilly from the national political scene into preoccupation with its own internal affairs. Events suggest that they are mistaken. Despite its pursuit of many populist antikibbutz policies, Likud was weakened by fundamental problems: the settlement program on the West Bank was controversial and divisive, the war in Lebanon was disastrous, and Israel's economy went from bad to worse, bringing hardship to the poor urbanites who had supported Likud. The deadlock following the 1984 and 1988 elections and the Peres-Shamir agreements to share power suggest that the Israel Labor Party is far from dead.

For its part, the kibbutz movement was undoubtedly shaken by the 1977 "earthquake," but responded, as Sherman (1982) demonstrates, by renewed political activism, attempting to confront the Likud attack. It seems that the "earthquake" may have revitalized the movement's role in national politics, not only at government level, but also at the grass roots, by stimulating, for example, involvement in nonkibbutz trade-union activities at the local level and in inter-ethnic political dialogue (Sherman, 1982).

The significance of the kibbutzim in Israeli society after 1948 continued to rest on their secure economic base. As the most modernized sector of Israeli agriculture in the late 1940s and early 1950s, they were called upon to produce food for the influx of immigrants (Stern, 1965) and therefore began to suffer from a manpower shortage, soon to be exacerbated by the political upheavals of the 1950s. At the same time, Israel's borders with her neighbors were closed, trade ended (Rokach, 1964c), and the new state tried to increase agricultural production as quickly as possible. This policy proved particularly favorable to the kibbutzim, whose inclination for mechanization and intensification of production could be rapidly satisfied by government sponsorship of efficient agriculture. Already more mechanized than other agricultural sectors in 1948, they maintained an advantage for several years (Kanovsky, 1966). The quota system, aimed at controlling the nationwide overproduction that ensued in the late

1950s, seems to have operated to the advantage of longer established and more efficient producers, particularly the kibbutzim (cf. Abarbanel, 1972). By this time the kibbutzim were abandoning production of unprofitable crops. For example, vegetable production, with its low returns on high labor input, became a moshav enterprise (Kanovsky, 1966). Generally, individual kibbutz economies became less diversified (Garber and Cohen, 1964), departing from the principle of a diversified economy that operated in the kibbutzim before 1948.

Unlike the moshavim, the kibbutzim could produce economic specialists whose trained expertise in one branch of production allowed more rapid economic advance (Shepher, 1972). The moshav farmers, with their small plots, were inevitably generalists, especially in the early years. Job specialization helped the effort to establish kibbutz industrial branches, which began in the early years of the state (Don, 1977) and became particularly successful after the 1967 war (Sherman, 1982). Industrial branches were stimulated by the general drive towards economic advance (Cohen, 1966) and later on by the attempts of the kibbutz movement to counteract any drift to the cities and industrial employment.

Although remarkably successful after 1948, the kibbutzim did encounter a number of problems. Labor shortages were only partly solved by the abandonment of labor intensive crops and by increasing mechanization and efficiency of production. The development of industrial branches exacerbated the shortage, and kibbutzim with such branches soon took on large numbers of hired laborers (Stern, 1965). The occupation of the West Bank in 1967 provided kibbutz industry with an important source of hired labor (Sherman, 1982). The lack of sources for recruitment of members continued to worsen the labor problem. The location of some kibbutzim meant that they were farming under difficult conditions, on poor soil with little water (Garber and Cohen, 1964). Rokach (1964a) notes that the new state was very slow to develop irrigation, inhibiting many kibbutzim in their agricultural enterprises. The kibbutzim most affected by such problems were the more recently founded ones (near the borders, in the Negev desert, etc.), which also suffered the greatest labor shortages. The kibbutzim had also faced a heavy burden of debt in the early 1950s. In an effort to expand and develop their economies quickly in the later years of the Mandate, they had taken out short-term, high-interest loans from private sources (Kanovsky, 1966). These loans were gradually replaced by long-term low-interest loans allocated by the Settlement Department, and the debt problems of the kibbutzim were eased over the 1950s and 1960s.

The first Likud government's attempts to eradicate the low-interest loan arrangements—widely seen as unfair preferential treatment for communities that did not need it—had little impact on the kibbutzim because by the 1970s, they were economically secure. During the years of statehood, the movement had increased its efficiency and profitability, raised the standard of living of its members relative to that of other Israelis (Kanovsky, 1966; Shatil, 1966; Stern, 1965) and built for itself an economically secure position allowing prosperity virtually independent of government policy and resources sufficient to free some members to continue engaging in politics. The movement could therefore work to maintain its position in the wider society.

KIBBUTZ INFLUENCE

The very direct way in which the kibbutz movement influenced the state of Israel can be demonstrated by investigating the developing process of national planning, which for many years bore the stamp of the kibbutz movement's ideological and practical involvement.

Before 1948, individual kibbutzim planned their own economic activities from year to year (Drabkin, 1962), and there were no national or regional plans (Rokach, 1964b, 1964c). Pioneering Zionism showed strong agricultural and rural bias, due to the emphasis on manual labor and efforts to alter the *shtetl* way of life (Diamond, 1957). Rural settlement attained political, ideological, and financial priority; despite some attention to Jewish urban settlement, such as the foundation of Tel Aviv in 1909, and despite the fact that the majority of Jewish immigrants settled in urban areas, urban development proceeded in a haphazard manner (Cohen, 1970; Troen, 1988). There were a few desultory attempts at rationalizing urban settlement—for example, some urban kibbutzim and housing cooperatives—but these had little effect in producing planned urban settlement. Cohen (1970) argues that the problems of Israeli cities today—poverty, overcrowding, and inter-ethnic tension—originated in the Mandate period when city development was largely ignored.

In 1948, therefore, the Yishuv had little experience with the two kinds of planning it was to need to cope with the massive influx of immigrants. Long-term, large-scale economic planning had no precedent in the Yishuv, and settlement planning had a strong ideological bias in favor of rural areas (cf. Lipton, 1968). The immediate challenges of 1948–1950 were to settle quickly the new immigrants and increase the food supply. This was achieved by short-term emergency measures, and long-term planning commenced only in the 1950s (Rokach, 1964c; Troen, 1988).

Economic planning focused firmly on agriculture (Kanovsky, 1966), partly because of the necessity of food production and partly because of the dominant pioneering ideology. The first development plan for 1951–1954 proved unrealistic: it grossly overestimated the number of new settlements, the available water resources, and the development of irrigation. It proposed a rise in the proportion of agricultural workers, aimed at autarky in all food products except grain and meat, and planned to continue existing types of settlement, assuming increasing productivity, as in the kibbutzim. Rokach (1964c) asserts that all these proposals were made without examining their economic rationality: the number of agricultural workers was too high, and autarky was simply too costly. He attributes these failings to the lack of understanding by the settlement authorities of the new types of immigrants and their potentialities, to the lack of skilled planners, and to the ideology of agriculture developed in the Yishuv. His study therefore shows some of the consequences for post-1948 planning of the dominance of the kibbutz movement—of course, kibbutz veterans were heavily involved in the administration of the new state.

A later plan produced in 1953, though it recognized the water problems and considered the international balance of payments, was heavily criticized by

Israeli and foreign experts for a lack of reality similar to the earlier one. Only in 1956 was a more satisfactory plan produced, but even this was not fully implemented, owing again to problems with water resources, and this time to insufficient investment. These false starts in economic planning can be largely attributed, as Rokach (1964c) and Cohen (1970) suggest, to the ideological factors already examined.

Pioneering Zionism was incorporated into settlement planning in the form of the slogan "dispersal of population." The planners recognized the lack of precedents for settlement planning in the Yishuv and turned to the past experiences of urbanization in other countries (especially European countries) for a model. The model they adopted was that of a "hierarchy of settlements" (Cohen, 1970), a range of community sizes from the small village (seen as the "basic agricultural cell," Cohen, 1970), to rural centers—which would provide services for local villages—regional centers, district centers, and cities—which were to be national centers. With very few exceptions, only the bottom and the top of the hierarchy existed in the new state, and the planners set about establishing the middle-sized towns. Their earliest attempts proved to be "foreign bodies" (Cohen, 1970) in areas of already established settlements: the agricultural communities surrounding them, the kibbutzim, and old-established moshavim resented their presence, and though a few provided jobs for the new urbanites as the planners had intended, many refused to do so on ideological grounds. Conditions in the new towns were poor, life was monotonous, and many people left out of sheer boredom. The towns were accorded low status in the country as a whole: only new immigrants with no choice would go and live in them (Berler, 1972; Cohen, 1970; Deshen, 1970). Not until the 1960s did small town life improve, when the agricultural bias was relaxed, and towns were given specific economic tasks of their own, free of the agricultural enterprises of the already established settlements that surrounded them (Cohen, 1970; Deshen, 1970). These tasks included agroindustry and, later on, mining. Troen (1988) emphasizes the radical recognition embodied in this later settlement planning: Israel was, and would continue to be, a predominantly urban society. Kibbutzim helped ensure that a planned, successfully functioning urban society would be hard won.

The kibbutz movement's influence on planning was, as one would expect, beneficial for the kibbutzim. Before 1948, some kibbutzim belonging to the same federation and located near one another had taken part in limited cooperation. Garber and Cohen (1964) give several examples of well-established kibbutzim providing advice and labor assistance for smaller and struggling ones. When national planning began, the kibbutz communities, as I have pointed out, tended to remain aloof from developments, despite movement members' involvement in the planning process at national level. Developing social isolation in the 1950s however—particularly as new immigrants went to moshavism and towns—served to persuade the kibbutzim that first, they should cooperate across federation boundaries, and second, that they would have to take part in the regional planning programs. Cooperation gave kibbutzim increased access to agricultural machinery, allowed repair shops to be used on a regional basis, provided regional processing plants for kibbutz products, and allowed the establishment and main-

tenance of cultural centers. Garber and Cohen (1964) argue that involvement in regional cooperation helped the kibbutzim to overcome their social isolation and retain their visible, elite positions.

It also provided solutions to some internal problems. New kibbutzim in particular were suffering labor shortages; cooperation with other kibbutzim alleviated them. The new kibbutzim also benefited from access to farm machinery and other services available in the regional centers. Some writers (Garber and Cohen, 1964; Kanovsky, 1966; Stern, 1965) suggest that regional cooperation also allowed the kibbutzim to solve, at least for a time, their problems over hired labor. The regional processing plants and other industrial enterprises hired the workers; the kibbutzim no longer had to face the ideological ambiguity of hired workers on their own doorsteps.

ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCE

The influences of the kibbutz movement and the state have been mutual. The kibbutz movement looked outwards into the Yishuv and the Israeli state and sought ways of influencing their character. It also aimed to further its own internal development and was able to take advantage of events to do so. The results of these interactions can be traced to every aspect of kibbutz life today. This does not mean that somehow kibbutzim are identical to all other sectors of Israeli society. Over the years, the kibbutz movement has developed a distinctive ideology, remains marked by ideological self-consciousness and self-examination, and retains commitment to a communal life realized though a distinctive set of institutions. Furthermore, the processes of interaction in any particular kibbutz give it a distinctive character, affecting the workings of its institutions and the expression of the ideological charter. Nevertheless, if every aspect of kibbutz life today shows environmental influence of the kind dealt with in this article, then the use of the kibbutz as a social scientific laboratory could be very misleading, and the basis of comparative study problematic. The examples of environmental influence on the internal character of a kibbutz that will now be discussed are based on the findings of fieldwork I carried out in the mid-1970s on a left-wing kibbutz I shall here call Goshen.

Kibbutz-environment interaction is particularly clearly demonstrated in the economy (Bowes, 1984). In the mid-1970s, Goshen's economy showed all the characteristics predictable from the historical account: its orientation toward efficiency and progress meant it was trying to make money with a specialized, trained workforce, commercially viable products, industrialization, and the use of regional processing facilities run by the movement. Its problems too were predictable: founded in the late 1940s, Goshen had suffered from the recruitment problems experienced by the movement as a whole, and, therefore, its economic efforts were hampered by underpopulation. Combined with the drive to have large, efficient economic branches, this underpopulation led to particularly acute labor shortages, resulting in protracted ideological debate as the community tried to avoid hiring workers. An interesting example of this process (discussed at length in Bowes, 1988) occurred when Goshen faced a crisis with its cotton

crop. In early 1975, the plants were growing well, but so were the weeds, and workers were needed to hoe the fields. Temporary volunteer workers from abroad worked hard at the task, and there were several mobilizations of kibbutz members; both these measures were ideologically acceptable. But even after these measures were used, the crop was still threatened by the weeds. Members were faced with a contradictory situation: they needed to save the crop, and yet vehemently opposed hiring paid labor, which was the only means of doing so. The situation was resolved by a meeting of the General Assembly (the governing body of the community); those most against hiring stayed away, and those most committed to economic success voted to hire workers the next day. A few days later, when the emergency was over, another meeting, with the righteous participation of the objectors, reaffirmed Goshen's commitment to unpaid labor.

Both economic efficiency and the unwillingness to hire labor had long been kibbutz movement principles, which had evolved in interaction with the wider Jewish society in Palestine and Israel. Loyalty to this principle meant a constant internal debate and often complicated maneuvering for the community, as in the case described. But there was no question of one principle being permanently sacrificed to the other: ceasing to strive for economic success would threaten the movement's strong position in the wider socioeconomic structure of Israel and admitting to a permanent hired labor force would threaten the movement's autonomy. As far as possible, Goshen pursued a strategy allowing both economic success and kibbutz autonomy at this stage.

Within the structural parameters imposed by the position of kibbutzim in Israeli society, the people in Goshen worked at consolidating their own positions in the community, their aims (such as training and permanent jobs), dictated by historical precedent, and their strategies, comprehensible through examination of the interweaving of the details of social interaction in Goshen with the historically dictated structure. Certainly, a distinctively kibbutz way of doing things could be identified, but its rationale and workings were comprehensible only in context; they were not experiments in controlled conditions.

The position of women in the kibbutz movement today is explicable through examination of kibbutz-environment interaction (Bowes, 1978, 1986). Far from demonstrating women's "biogrammar" (Tiger and Shepher, 1975), the collectively domestic and subordinate role of women today results largely from a series of compromises made by the movement in the interests of continuing influence and involvement in the wider Israeli society. The early years of the kibbutz movement showed attempts to challenge the old patriarchal relationships of Jewish communities, and kibbutz women particularly tried to liberate themselves from domestic chores and childcare. But the efforts of the predominantly male kibbutz movement were directed at statehood and, later, at influencing government policy, not at liberating kibbutz women. The ideology of manhood (Hazelton, 1977; Rein, 1980) associated with pioneering Zionism remained, practically speaking, virtually unchallenged. After 1948, it was perpetuated and consolidated as successive Labor governments (involving kibbutz movement members) made concessions to religious political parties over matters relating to women's status to help ensure that issues considered more important would go Labor's way. The

laws had direct implications for kibbutz women, relating, for example, to working conditions considered suitable for women and the regulation of marriages; in both cases, the laws passed were detrimental to women's emancipation (Lahav, 1977). Furthermore, it soon became clear that changing women's roles was not really a priority in the kibbutz movement. Women were gradually moved into service occupations in the name of efficiency, so that they could be near their children, a traditional notion that had never really been challenged. Women's work and service work, both called unproductive, became synonymous, devaluing women themselves. Cut out of "productive" economic branches where the "really important" work was done, women lost touch with formal community power, lacked the economic expertise of men, and became politically marginal. Women on Goshen were concentrated in service work and in childcare. Their concerns reflected the history that had shaped their roles: they expected to work in service branches, even though they did not particularly enjoy doing so, and many of them saw fulfillment in marriage and children. Indeed women's investment in their children, to a degree out of keeping with movement ideology, can be interpreted as a counter attack against the devaluing process (cf. Bowes, 1978, 1986). Recent changes in the childcare system on some kibbutzim (but not Goshen), such as provision for children to spend the night with their parents rather than in children's houses, can therefore be traced back to the kibbutz-environment relationship.

In comparison with other Israeli Jewish women, kibbutz women are relatively emancipated, particularly as they are not individually dependent on one man. Goshen's women recognized this, and retained allegiance to the (albeit rather one-sided) feminism of the old pioneering Zionist ideology. In their way, therefore, kibbutz women identified themselves with the elite, effectively supporting the strategies of kibbutz politicians.

A further example of environmental influence on the kibbutz can be seen in ritual (Bowes, 1982). Goshen, as a member of the Kibbutz Artzi, the most left-wing of the kibbutz federations, was officially atheist. The annual ritual cycle included a number of ceremonies whose celebration expressed what I have elsewhere (Bowes, 1982) termed a "culture of unbelief." In principle, atheist kibbutzim celebrated historical, agricultural, and national festivals, but no religious ones. Traditional Jewish festivals were divested of their religious content and turned to the purpose of celebrating the kibbutz itself. On Goshen, people showed considerable discomfort with the celebration of these altered traditional festivals. Very often, events to mark them were chaotic, people were unwilling to take part, they talked ostentatiously throughout the celebrations, they complained that things were badly organized, the entertainment was boring, and so on. Such behavior can be interpreted as a means of enhancing the challenge to tradition that the modification of old festivals had set out to achieve. Mere reinterpretation, it seems, was not enough to maintain atheism and, hence, an important aspect of kibbutz autonomy, and the bastion against the outsider ideology had to be reinforced. Meanwhile, kibbutz politicians making concessions to religious parties in government were strengthening the hold of religion over all Israeli Jews. As this happened over the years of Goshen's

development, the use of traditional festivals had changed somewhat. In the early years of the state, straightforward opposition to, and ignorance of, tradition were the norm; but by the 1970s, a more complicated engagement with tradition developed, involving far more elaborate details of meaning and symbolic reinterpretation.

As the influence of religion in Israel has strengthened, the kibbutz culture of unbelief has become more elaborate and more complicated for kibbutz members to explain. For example, kibbutz members now undergo religious marriage: there is no civil marriage in Israel. Members of Goshen explained that they had a formal marriage because they wanted their children to be legitimate and, having decided that, the marriage had to be a religious one. They held the ceremony away from the kibbutz, however, and would celebrate at home later with a thoroughly secular party. Non-Jewish recruits to Goshen were encouraged to convert to Judaism—on the surface a paradoxical measure, but one which ensured that they would learn about being Jewish and how to be Jewishly anti-religious.

Further examples could be given, but these three should serve to emphasize how far social life within the contemporary kibbutz is shaped by the relationship between the kibbutz and the wider structure of which it forms a part.

CONCLUSION

During the Yishuv, the kibbutz movement became established as a dominant force in Jewish society in Palestine. At the same time, the movement itself was undergoing ideological and organizational consolidation, and its ability to do so depended on the acceptance of the Yishuv environment. This is particularly apparent when we note the reliance of the kibbutzim on the Zionist movement for recruits and the strictness of the British Mandate rule over Palestine, which encouraged the kibbutzim to participate in illegal immigration and the military actions of the Jewish community. Furthermore, we find that the progressive orientations and efficiency of kibbutz agriculture and the viability of the kibbutz form of social organization won it favor from the J.N.F. and enabled the movement to expand. The greatest success of the kibbutz movement, its ideological and political ascendancy, was therefore due partly to the circumstances in which it found itself and partly to its own inherent properties. One of these properties, responsiveness, was particularly crucial.

The foundation of the state in 1948 was quickly followed by radical changes in the environment of the kibbutz movement, which responded to these changes in two ways. On the one hand, the kibbutzim themselves became isolated, as the moshav movement grew in importance and the sources of kibbutz recruits lessened. Small new kibbutzim suffered additional problems due to their inability to attract enough recruits to become established. On the other hand, members and former members of the movement were heavily involved in the administration of the new state, and pioneering ideology retained its prominence.

In the discussion of economic and social planning, we were able to see the extent of kibbutz influence on Israeli society particularly clearly, both in the

early economic plans and the principles of settlement planning. Realization of the problems of maintaining the kibbutz orientation and the subsequent revision of the plans meant that the kibbutzim were obliged to modify their attitudes towards other types of settlement and to become directly involved in the regional development programs. Despite the apparent setbacks immediately after statehood, the kibbutzim, particularly the newer ones, were able to stabilize their membership and continue their own economic progress.

The three examples of the kibbutz economy and the roles of women and of ritual suggested some ways in which the internal character of the kibbutz is profoundly influenced by the involvement of the movement in Israeli society.

I set out in this article to examine aspects of kibbutz movement's history and organization that will, in my view, serve seriously to question many of the comparative studies I reviewed at the beginning. The kibbutz simply cannot be cut out of its context and used as a community *per se* for comparative purposes. Nor can it be used to draw lessons for other societies, cooperative or otherwise, as if it were a clean, tidy, social laboratory. The growth of the kibbutz movement has depended to a very considerable degree upon the nature of the Yishuv and the state of Israel; indeed, part of the success of the "experiment that did not fail" is external to the communities themselves. In utopian socialist terms, the kibbutz movement appears to have succeeded in exercising considerable influence on the wider society. The intimate relationship between the kibbutz and its environment and its dependence on this environment for its success might be taken to indicate that, as a communal way of life, the kibbutz cannot be repeated anywhere else or compared with any other social organization. This would, however, be an overreaction to the errors of the enthusiastic commentators considered earlier and is, in any case, sociologically unproductive. A more moderate response, and one more appropriate to comparative study, would be to recognize the importance of the environment of the kibbutz; in other words, to look beyond the analytical boundaries of a community based micro-study.

In examining the place of the kibbutz in the Yishuv and Israeli society, I focused on a variety of social factors. It appeared that the kibbutz enjoyed ideological and political success particularly, and that its defensive role was also of great importance. For purposes of comparative study, this suggests the productivity of holism, an argument for the adoption of an anthropological orientation, which allows study of all the facets of social life. It echoes, for example, Apthorpe's (1970) stress on the importance of planners' looking beyond purely economic factors when attempting to set up cooperatives as part of programs of planned social change.

It is particularly evident in the case of the kibbutz movement that community-environment interaction affected both community and environment. For the comparative study of communes, this suggests two useful points, perhaps obvious, but certainly forgotten in the material reviewed earlier. First, however hard communards may try to make their way of life separate and different from life around them, we must expect them to remain affected by it. Second, communes

themselves must be expected to have an impact on the society around them, and may eventually change it, even without the kind of direct intervention observed in the kibbutz case.

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